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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 4708
RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 001611

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR EUR/SE (GARBE) AND EUR/CARC (HUNT)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/07/2018

TAGS: TU AM GG IR IZ KNNP PREL RU US NATO

SUBJECT: TURKEY: PRESIDENT GUL MEETS U/S BURNS

REF: A. ANKARA 1602

¶B. ANKARA 1597

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson, for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. During a September 5 meeting with Under Secretary Burns, Turkish President Gul said his trip to Yerevan the next day is intended to lay the foundation for progress in bilateral relations. He spoke at length about his private "blunt" discussions with Iranian President Ahmadinejad and expressed disquiet at how the Iranians appear "detached from reality." He insisted that Turkey is serious about pursuing a Cyprus solution, but noted Turkish redlines. On Caucasus, Gul called Russia the most powerful country in the region. We must make the limits clear, but not needlessly agitate them. Gul underscored the importance of Turkey's close cooperation with the U.S., calling it a major pillar of Turkish foreign policy. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) President Gul told U/S Burns that given the many regional problems Turkey faces, problems where U.S. and Turkish issues largely overlap, consultation and cooperation with the U.S. is one of the main pillars of this country's foreign policy. Gul acknowledged that there have been recent misunderstandings, but insisted Turkey has been "very clear" on its commitment to maintaining its strong place in the Western alliance, its pursuit of common values and its pro-U.S. direction. He appreciated the wide-ranging telephone conversation he had with the President several days earlier. U/S Burns agreed that the many common challenges we face necessitates our close work together and that we listen to one another.

Caucasus

¶3. (C) President Gul called the situation in Georgia "very worrisome." Turkey belongs to both the Balkans and the Caucasus, Gul noted, and peace and stability in both is crucial for Turkey. What has worked out so well for the former should also be applied in the latter. Turkey had come out strongly in support of Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. This stance will continue. But, Gul added, Russia is the most powerful country in the region. It is necessary to act so as not to pull the region into greater problems and at the same time make our redlines clear. Turkey fully supports the position of the allies, but also wants not needlessly to agitate the Russians.

¶4. (C) U/S Burns said the U.S. admires Turkey's support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia. Russia's behavior has been dangerous and deeply disturbing, and Russia needs to comply with the Sarkozy-Medvedev six-point plan. The U.S. would do everything possible to get

Georgia back on its feet. Turkey's efforts in this regard are important, too.

Iran

¶ 15. (C) President Gul described his 90-minute one-on-one with Iranian President Ahmadinejad in Istanbul last month. The discussion had focused almost exclusively on the nuclear issue, and Gul was blunt. Gul said he told Ahmadinejad that "closed" countries such as Iran have difficulty understanding global developments and regional realities. For example, Ahmadinejad had boasted that when Iran's relations with Europe deteriorate, it is the Europeans who lose. Gul had responded that if this is true, why is Tehran unable to access its frozen assets in Europe? Cutting off Iran from modernity, technology and globalization may create a situation in which the country suddenly collapses. Gul commented that Ahmadinejad seems detached from reality -- "a day dreamer."

¶ 16. (C) Gul's impression was that while the Iranians may appreciate the contents of the P5 1 package, the regime is looking for security guarantees. He stressed that U/S Burns' participation in the Geneva meeting with other P5 1 Political Directors on July 19, had made an impression on Iran's leaders. He added that Ahmadinejad was unfailingly courteous when referring to the U.S. and to President Bush. Gul observed that Iranian domestic politics are complex and that no faction commands authority. This dynamic requires outreach to a wide-range of influential players. He also noted that many Iranians ("this segment is larger than you think") are eager for good relations with the West, but are

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sensitive to Iran's treatment by the West.

¶ 17. (C) U/S Burns agreed that Iran faces dangers from within its own society; Iran faces a number of contradictions, including a gap between the regime and its increasingly youthful population who yearn for modernity, and connections to the West. Iran's continued pursuit of a nuclear program in defiance of the international community's concerns is an obstacle to Iran's integration but the P5 1 offer could serve as an opportunity for Iran. In Geneva, the U/S had been clear and firm: our presence represented P5 1 unity and demonstrated that the USG stands behind the P5 1 offer but if Iran does not accept the package, consequences will follow. He said that Gul's blunt messages seem important and urged that the U.S. and Turkey continue to coordinate. Burns also urged Ankara to reconsider energy cooperation agreements with Iran; these deals portray a business as usual attitude which could lead the Iranians to believe that the international community is not united against Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions.

Armenia

¶ 18. (C) Gul said Turkey has set its course on resolving all its neighborhood problems. The state of Turkey-Armenia relations "saddens us." We want to be on a proper level with all neighbors, he said. Accordingly, Ankara has made gestures to Yerevan: inviting the Armenians to join the Black Sea Economic Cooperation; extending aid; providing unhindered air transport links; allowing 70,000 Armenians to work illegally in Turkey without repercussions. Gul acknowledged that President Sarkisian had made a "brave move" to invite Gul to Yerevan. The move was appreciated. He noted they will not be there "just to watch the game." The two presidents planned to lay the foundation for an improved atmosphere. They will not discuss details. They want to initiate a process.

¶ 19. (C) Gul planned to talk in Yerevan about the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform (CSCP). The Armenians and

Azerbaijanis have problems between them. The region will be at risk as long as these problems continue. Armenia becoming part of the West, as well as a CSCP partner, is in Turkey's interest. The Minsk Group process has only perpetuated the status quo, which means much time has been lost. Solving the Armenia-Azerbaijan problems would produce a "new unity" for the entire region. If this were realized, Iran would "no longer be so dearly needed." The Georgia events have prompted Ankara to focus on the Caucasus. It hopes for USG support.

¶10. (C) U/S Burns expressed admiration for President Gul's trip to Yerevan. This shows both courage and initiative. He agreed that opportunities often arise from crisis. Making Armenia a partner of the West could open the door to a Nagorno-Karabakh solution. The U.S. is ready to consult and cooperate closely with Turkey on regional issues, although it's important to think through carefully initiatives like the CSCP, and not inadvertently send the wrong signals about Russia's role.

Iraq

¶11. (C) Gul described Iraq as going through a critical phase. Still, Ankara is pleased that things are improving in terms of the security situation and in the Maliki administration's ability to govern. Turkey is aware of USG efforts to conclude a Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA) and a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with Baghdad. Ankara would like to have closer consultation with the U.S., not only on the SOFA but also on proposed laws regarding elections and petroleum. Relations with the north of the country are key. Turkey for years during the Saddam era supported the rights of the Iraqi Kurds, and protected them, but is concerned about their "maximalist" position. In Kirkuk, the rights of the Turkomen should be protected. The city is a microcosm of Iraq and, as such, should represent a model for the entire nation. The proposed 32 32 32 4 powersharing formula for the provincial assembly is a good one.

¶12. (C) U/S. Burns said we would try to arrange for Ankara consultations with Iraq Coordinator Ambassador Satterfield. We look forward to continuing our cooperation with Turkey on intelligence sharing to combat the PKK. He expressed support

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for the work of UNAMI and di Mistura.

Cyprus

¶13. (C) Gul said that he discussed in late August with visiting Turkish Cypriot leader Talat Turkey's support for a lasting Cyprus settlement. This support is not a tactic; Turkey is not trying to endear itself to the rest of the world. Ankara wants a solution. However, it cannot turn away from "basic tenets." These include the existing U.N. parameters; bizonality; two equal political entities; and Turkey as a guarantor state. Turkey already has shown its good intentions through its strong advocacy of the Annan Plan in 2004. This stance will continue. Gul said he only hopes the Greek Cypriots' commitment is not tactical but rather a genuine effort to achieve a settlement.

¶14. (C) U/S Burns said the U.S. will do all it can to support the U.N. process, and will stay in touch with Ankara. There have been too many missed opportunities.

¶15. (U) U/S Burns has cleared this cable.

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WILSON